

Student's Name

Professor's Name

Course

Date

### Middle English Literature

The Renaissance is a movement between the fifteenth and seventeenth century whose association arises from the pan-European Renaissance (Petrides, Constantinos, and Wittreich 12). This era of 12<sup>th</sup> to the fourteenth century, witnessed robust literature use and relied on the chancery standards, and the control of the press. It also led to a rising in the application of news led to the Elizabethan writing characterized by extensive poetry and drama. Works such as the Aeneid, the pearl poets, as well as the Ormulum were dominant. The literary works of the upcoming poets and authors had to circulate in manuscripts first. After acceptance in the eyes of the public, they would then be published. Indeed, 'The impacts are evident in the shipwrecks and non- religious themes of Shakespeare' (Greenblatt 12). The infamous poem, *Havelok the Dane*, was one such piece of the poet that appeared in the fourteenth century. The beautiful story of love and virtue and triumph features a virtuous Viking by the name Havelok. The story is fascinating as it depicts him as the humble Danish Prince who overcomes the villain Goldrich to reign over England. History values the piece as in addition to being a revelation to the middle age romanticism that rewards kindness; it employs exquisite literary techniques that deem it relatable (Hanning 597). Overall, the thrilling poem seeks to educate the society on the kingship scenario in the middle age era as well as vouch for legit and just leadership. The literacy and creative works in *Havelok the Dane* centered on the history, the law, as well as religion of

England, hence is critical towards understanding the origin and the advancement of the British Isles history.

## Analysis

### Text history

The text exists in a Lincolnshire format and is one of the earliest poems created in England. It came out towards the end of 'collection of saints' era and before the verse Romance to reaffirm the role of romance in the particular era (Hanning 590). This literary element represents one of the most notable romance poems created and referenced by the Middle English people. History places its creation between 1280 and 1290 (Halpern 7). The notable element appeared from line 37- 818 of the element *Estoire des Engleis* created by Geoffrey Gaimer in the year 1135. It counts as the second longest surviving English Romance after King Horn. Even though several versions of the segments emerged later, the original telling came out at 1135-1140. The tale centers on the English legends, and for this, it expresses an outstanding interest in kingship, the working class rulership, as well as the English law. It also earns the classification of Bourgeois romance as it centered on the themes of proverbial wisdom, virtue, and hard work.

### Plot

The tale plays out in England and follows the demise of the virtuous king Ethelwood, who is the ideal of a virtuous leader at that time. After he dies, he leaves his daughter, Goldboro, who is also the heir to the throne, under the care of Earl of Cornwall, Goldrich who becomes the regent. Soon after the demise, Goldboro betrays the kings by setting an oppressive regime as well as sentencing Goldboro. As the poem shifts to a Denmark setting, another virtuous leader Birkabein passes on leaving behind a son named Havelock and his two sisters. A regent, Godard

assumes the care of the children but tortures him causing him to escape to the hands of a fisherman named Grim. The lives of Grim and Havelock lies at the mercies of the oppressor who asks the former to kill the latter to secure his life. Before Grim could conduct the killing, he notices the astonishing mark of kingship in his mouth, spares him, and adopts him. Havelock grows up and displays his superpower at a competition in Lincoln, which Godrich attends too. He later marries Goldboro. She sees a vision that Havelock would be the leader of England and Denmark. Later, he, alongside Grim, travels back to Denmark to claim his throne and with the help of nobleman Ubbe, he wins. He raises a grant army which is pivotal towards defeating Godard. Later, he seizes England, overthrows Godrich, and rules from 735 to 818 (Halpern 5). More astonishingly, he and his wife Goldboro bears fifteen children who grow up o become rulers.

Analysis based on the time issue

It fits perfectly in time the renaissance era as it revolves on the character Amlaib Cuaran, a nose Gaelic ruler of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. It offers a glimpse of the livelihood of the life lived by the people of England following the Norman Conquest. It mirrors England leadership and livelihood of the people in England in that particular era of kingship. It majors on the activities that entailed the transition of England from the medieval to the modern era. Warfare was the order of the day, and ruthless leaders tend to rule over cities. However, with the rise of leaders as Godrich, the society managed to restore the glory of such cities to its original stature. As the story depicts, the acquisition of the isles of Britain took massive cessation, work that only charismatic and willful leaders would have done. It takes form during a pre and post-conquest where battles are the order of the day. The poem is cheerfully violent, cognizant of kindness, and a punisher of cruelty, thus it acquaints the audience with the notion of restoring the rightful king to the throne. One would

not have thought of a better story to explore medieval England. Definitively, the legend story of Havelock 'reimages the history of England and its successive battles which led to its restructuring' (Maus 86). A close look provides the insights that the poet might as well have used the events in question to bring out the actual series of acts like the Norman Conquest where Duke William of France faced off King Harold of England in the infamous battle of Hastings.

During the English Renaissance period, several issues came up which affected the lives of the people. The literary work like poems and other pieces of art came in handy towards celebrating glory, compassion and even placing the value of virtue on deserving people. In the renaissance era, for instance, the lives of the people rested at the mercies of ruthless leaders. The power struggles thus were common in such times. The authors of this segment wish to give away the differences between the commendable and the four leaders. At such a time when the political arena was capitalist, a good leader came in handy in salvaging the dynasties. The wealthy had a more significant portion of the resources in the community, and for that, they tramped over the less fortunate. As indicated, dictators like Goldrich got away with vile leadership and killing of innocent people. The prices of commodities in their activities could be affordable to their fellow wealthy individuals. The poor suffered discrimination and lacked access to essential items such as food and shelter. The high prices and poor living conditions made it difficult for equality to prevail in society. This piece of poetry, like any Elizabethan era poetry, exhibits the kind of social life that the individuals during the English renaissance led. Even though battles reigned and claimed so many lives, the God-anointed leaders always emerged and savored the land. The manner that the young, able man Havalok was destined to redeem and rule over Denmark and England, mirrors the actual actions which happened on the backdrop that is England. It mirrors

the commendable leaders like King Henry IV who fought countless battles to secure the English people from the invasion of the Latin-speaking communities.

Individuals made use of the court as a link between the ordinary individuals and nobility. It is in the court that people had a chance to express their skills and abilities. People with properly mastery of writing and fluency in communication had a chance in the court. The ordinary people sold their belongings to invest in expensive items to fit in the social class. The costly things acted as a catch for the attention of the queen. In return, one would have a chance to be in part of the high social class. The opportunity brought about fame and prosperity towards the upper social class in the community.

The mystic power that the protagonists of the tale present with also signifies a significant chapter of classical mythology in the renaissance. The era that followed the Neolithic stage witnessed intense mythological aspects. People experienced visions and even exhibited other supernatural strengths. This aspect pointed out that God used his powers and the appointees to conduct his will among the people. Some critics are arguing that the person indicated the strength of the Danish community against the England one. Definitely, God intended to use his chosen to deliver his will among the people. Although the land Grimsby is not ideal for romance, it serves as the origin of a mythical legend, and hence it is legitimate (Maus 60).

Also, the period came during the period of reformation when the Bible had just faced translation. Individuals had the yearning to learn about the newly translated version which led to various interpretations and understanding of the religion. The ordinary people had gone through a severe transformation and held steadfast belief towards Christianity. The Roman Catholics clashed with the Christians over the aspect of Christianity. During this period that scientific facts became popular and people could explain occurrences through science. Therefore, a conflict

arose between science and religion. The fact that some of the things that religion explained were based on faith made it challenging to bring about a common understanding. For this, the system of monarchical reign appointed leaders from particular royal line regardless of their virtues. As indicated in the text the people had no say on the person who came next in leadership. Even vile leaders took leadership positions provided that they were the rightful heirs to the throne (Hanning 600).

During the 1400s, radicals rose such as Martin Luther and John Calvin who criticized the teachings of religion hence there was a need for a vast understanding of the Bible to overcome the secular beliefs. Individuals had the freedom to freely think and make independent decisions on their view on religion. The era had an influence on the Roman Catholic Church on the political problems of the country (Orgel 90). Henry VIII of England engendered separation between the religious and political issues. There had to be conformity between the political and religious world whereby the era made it possible. During the period, the supremacy of the monarchy had an impact on the church and state. The use of the power came with the wrongful use of laws leading to the rise of retributive laws.

According to religion, the new scientific theories did not make sense as it had a radical view on the perspectives of religion. Until the rise of the English Renaissance era, the church had total control over the community. They had teachings about the creation of the earth and the after death in heaven based on the Bible. However, the rise of science brought about theories which provided explanations on the existence of the world the challenge of the teachings brought about confusion and dilemma amongst various scholars. In most of the things, science a religion did not have a common ground; they contradicted each other. The scholars with scientific explanations did research and had their work published. These scholars faced excommunication

from the society; some were persecuted due to their different views on religion. The differences between religion and science contributed to a gap in issues that the two did not agree.

The tale also represents the broader theme of Danish's role in England. It confirms that the English community was willing to adopt the Anglo-Danish people, as it did the Anglo-Saxons. This tale hence serves to honor the place of these people in the England place. Even though their entry might have been forceful, their existence was authentic. Indeed, it indicates that during the renaissance which saw to cultural diversity, foreign rule was legal in England.

### Conclusion

The English Renaissance is a period in the English revolution that witnessed massive cultural, style, and artistic development. By 1400, England had undergone literature flourishing and had set the perspective of the world. The literary works of the great individuals of the period help in the understanding of the evolution of literature. This paper cites that Havelock the Dane was one of the outstanding works of that era whose role was to unwrap the political, dynasty, and leadership aspects of that era. Set in the backdrop of the post-struggle era, the book argues that such conquests always elevate the rightful leader to the throne. Its significance on the social and time relevance scenarios was outstanding. Havelock sent the appeal of a historical fantasy considering that a young Danish prince possessed the overwhelming might to rule over the two mighty states. Be that as may, it roots itself deeply in the culture, reality, and the landscape of the England society. Overall, literature in that era not only expressed the England culture, its curtain raised for English use in the world.

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